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NEW POEMS

POEMS BY D. H. LAWRENCE

LOVE POEMS AND OTHERS

AMORES

LOOK! WE HAVE COME THROUGH!

NEW POEMS

NEW POEMS

BY
D. H. LAWRENCE



NEW YORK
B. W. HUEBSCH
INC.
MCMXX

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TO
AMY LOWELL

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PREFACE

It seems when we hear a skylark singing as if sound were running forward into the future, running so fast and utterly without consideration, straight on into futurity. And when we hear a nightingale, we hear the pause and the rich, piercing rhythm of recollection, the perfected past. The lark may sound sad, but with the lovely lapsing sadness that is almost a swoon of hope. The nightingale's triumph is a pæan, but a death-pæan.

So it is with poetry. Poetry is, as a rule, either the voice of the far future, exquisite and ethereal, or it is the voice of the past, rich, magnificent. When the Greeks heard the Iliad and the Odyssey, they heard their own past calling in their hearts, as men far inland sometimes hear the sea and fall weak with powerful, wonderful regret, nostalgia; or else their own future rippled its time-beats through their blood, as they followed the painful, glamorous progress of the Ithacan. This was Homer to the Greeks: their Past, splendid with battles won and death achieved, and their Future, the magic wandering of Ulysses through the unknown.

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With us it is the same. Our birds sing on the horizons. They sing out of the blue, beyond us, or out of the quenched night. They sing at dawn and sunset. Only the poor, shrill, tame canaries whistle while we talk. The wild birds begin before we are awake, or as we drop into dimness, out of waking. Our poets sit by the gateways, some by the east, some by the west. As we arrive and as we go out our hearts surge with response. But whilst we are in the midst of life, we do not hear them.

The poetry of the beginning and the poetry of the end must have that exquisite finality, perfection which belongs to all that is far off. It is in the realm of all that is perfect. It is of the nature of all that is complete and consummate. This completeness, this consummateness, the finality and the perfection are conveyed in exquisite form: the perfect symmetry, the rhythm which returns upon itself like a dance where the hands link and loosen and link for the supreme moment of the end. Perfected bygone moments, perfected moments in the glimmering futurity, these are the treasured gem-like lyrics of Shelley and Keats.

But there is another kind of poetry: the poetry of that which is at hand: the immediate present. In

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the immediate present there is no perfection, no consummation, nothing finished. The strands are all flying, quivering, intermingling into the web, the waters are shaking the moon. There is no round, consummate moon on the face of running water, nor on the face of the unfinished tide. There are no gems of the living plasm. The living plasm vibrates unspeakably, it inhales the future, it exhales the past, it is the quick of both, and yet it is neither. There is no plasmic finality, nothing crystal, permanent. If we try to fix the living tissue, as the biologists fix it with formation, we have only a hardened bit of the past, the bygone life under our observation.

Life, the ever-present, knows no finality, no finished crystallisation. The perfect rose is only a running flame, emerging and flowing off, and never in any sense at rest, static, finished. Herein lies its transcendent loveliness. The whole tide of all life and all time suddenly heaves, and appears before us as an apparition, a revelation. We look at the very white quick of nascent creation. A water-lily heaves herself from the flood, looks round, gleams, and is gone. We have seen the incarnation, the quick of the ever-swirling flood. We have seen the invisible. We have seen, we have touched, we have partaken

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of the very substance of creative change, creative mutation. If you tell me about the lotus, tell me of nothing changeless or eternal. Tell me of the mystery of the inexhaustible, forever-unfolding creative spark. Tell me of the incarnate disclosure of the flux, mutation in blossom, laughter and decay perfectly open in their transit, nude in their movement before us.

Let me feel the mud and the heavens in my lotus. Let me feel the heavy, silting, sucking mud, the spinning of sky winds. Let me feel them both in purest contact, the nakedness of sucking weight, nakedly passing radiance. Give me nothing fixed, set, static. Don't give me the infinite or the eternal: nothing of infinity, nothing of eternity. Give me the still, white seething, the incandescence and the coldness of the incarnate moment: the moment, the quick of all change and haste and opposition: the moment, the immediate present, the Now. The immediate moment is not a drop of water running downstream. It is the source and issue, the bubbling up of the stream. Here, in this very instant moment, up bubbles the stream of time, out of the wells of futurity, flowing on to the oceans of the past. The source, the issue, the creative quick.

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There is poetry of this immediate present, instant poetry, as well as poetry of the infinite past and the infinite future. The seething poetry of the incarnate Now is supreme, beyond even the everlasting gems of the before and after. In its quivering momentaneity it surpasses the crystalline, pearl-hard jewels, the poems of the eternities. Do not ask for the qualities of the unfading timeless gems. Ask for the whiteness which is the seethe of mud, ask for that incipient putrescence which is the skies falling, ask for the never-pausing, never-ceasing life itself. There must be mutation, swifter than iridescence, haste, not rest, come-and-go, not fixity, inconclusiveness, immediacy, the quality of life itself, without dénouement or close. There must be the rapid momentaneous association of things which meet and pass on the forever incalculable journey of creation: everything left in its own rapid, fluid relationship with the rest of things.

This is the unrestful, ungraspable poetry of the sheer present, poetry whose very permanency lies in its wind-like transit. Whitman's is the best poetry of this kind. Without beginning and without end, without any base and pediment, it sweeps past forever, like a wind that is forever in passage, and un-

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chainable. Whitman truly looked before and after. But he did not sigh for what is not. The clue to all his utterance lies in the sheer appreciation of the instant moment, life surging itself into utterance at its very well-head. Eternity is only an abstraction from the actual present. Infinity is only a great reservoir of recollection, or a reservoir of aspiration: man-made. The quivering nimble hour of the present, this is the quick of Time. This is the immanence. The quick of the universe is the *pulsating, carnal self*, mysterious and palpable. So it is always.

Because Whitman put this into his poetry, we fear him and respect him so profoundly. We should not fear him if he sang only of the "old unhappy far-off things," or of the "wings of the morning." It is because his heart beats with the urgent, insurgent Now, which is even upon us all, that we dread him. He is so near the quick.

From the foregoing it is obvious that the poetry of the instant present cannot have the same body or the same motion as the poetry of the before and after. It can never submit to the same conditions. It is never finished. There is no rhythm which returns upon itself, no serpent of eternity with its tail

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in its own mouth. There is no static perfection, none of that finality which we find so satisfying because we are so frightened.

Much has been written about free verse. But all that can be said, first and last, is that free verse is, or should be direct utterance from the instant, whole man. It is the soul and the mind and body surging at once, nothing left out. They speak all together. There is some confusion, some discord. But the confusion and the discord only belong to the reality, as noise belongs to the plunge of water. It is no use inventing fancy laws for free verse, no use drawing a melodic line which all the feet must toe. Free verse toes no melodic line, no matter what drill-sergeant. Whitman pruned away his clichés — perhaps his clichés of rhythm as well as of phrase. And this is about all we can do, deliberately, with free verse. We can get rid of the stereotyped movements and the old hackneyed associations of sound or sense. We can break down those artificial conduits and canals through which we do so love to force our utterance. We can break the stiff neck of habit. We can be in ourselves spontaneous and flexible as flame, we can see that utterance rushes out without artificial foam or artificial smoothness. But we can-

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not positively prescribe any motion, any rhythm. All the laws we invent or discover — it amounts to pretty much the same — will fail to apply to free verse. They will only apply to some form of restricted, limited unfree verse.

All we can say is that free verse does *not* have the same nature as restricted verse. It is not of the nature of reminiscence. It is not the past which we treasure in its perfection between our hands. Neither is it the crystal of the perfect future, into which we gaze. Its tide is neither the full, yearning flow of aspiration, nor the sweet, poignant ebb of remembrance and regret. The past and the future are the two great bournes of human emotion, the two great homes of the human days, the two eternities. They are both conclusive, final. Their beauty is the beauty of the goal, finished, perfected. Finished beauty and measured symmetry belong to the stable, unchanging eternities.

But in free verse we look for the insurgent naked throb of the instant moment. To break the lovely form of metrical verse, and to dish up the fragments as a new substance, called *vers libre*, this is what most of the free-versifiers accomplish. They do not know that free verse has its own *nature*, that it is

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neither star nor pearl, but instantaneous like plasm. It has no goal in either eternity. It has no finish. It has no satisfying stability, satisfying to those who like the immutable. None of this. It is the instant; the quick; the very jetting source of all will-be and has-been. The utterance is like a spasm, naked contact with all influences at once. It does not want to get anywhere. It just takes place.

For such utterance any externally-applied law would be mere shackles and death. The law must come new each time from within. The bird is on the wing in the winds, flexible to every breath, a living spark in the storm, its very flickering depending upon its supreme mutability and power of change. Whence such a bird came: whither it goes: from what solid earth it rose up, and upon what solid earth it will close its wings and settle, this is not the question. This is a question of before and after. Now, *now*, the bird is on the wing in the winds.

Such is the rare new poetry. One realm we have never conquered: the pure present. One great mystery of time is terra incognita to us: the instant. The most superb mystery we have hardly recognized: the immediate, instant self. The quick of all time is the instant. The quick of all the universe, of

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all creation, is the incarnate, carnal self. Poetry gave us the clue: free verse: Whitman. Now we know.

The ideal — what is the ideal? A figment. An abstraction. A static abstraction, abstracted from life. It is a fragment of the before or the after. It is a crystallised aspiration, or a crystallised remembrance: crystallised, set, finished. It is a thing set apart, in the great storehouse of eternity, the storehouse of finished things.

We do not speak of things crystallised and set apart. We speak of the instant, the immediate self, the very plasm of the self. We speak also of free verse.

All this should have come as a preface to "Look! We have Come Through." But is it not better to publish a preface long after the book it belongs to has appeared? For then the reader will have had his fair chance with the book, alone.

D. H. LAWRENCE.

Pangbourne, 1919.

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APPREHENSION

AND all hours long, the town
 Roars like a beast in a cave
That is wounded there
And like to drown;
 While days rush, wave after wave
On its lair.

An invisible woe unseals
 The flood, so it passes beyond
All bounds: the great old city
Recumbent roars as it feels
 The foamy paw of the pond
Reach from immensity.

But all that it can do
 Now, as the tide rises,
Is to listen and hear the grim
Waves crash like thunder through
 The splintered streets, hear noises
Roll hollow in the interim.

COMING AWAKE

WHEN I woke, the lake-lights were quivering on the
wall,

The sunshine swam in a shoal across and across,
And a hairy, big bee hung over the primulas
In the window, his body black fur, and the sound
of him cross.

There was something I ought to remember: and yet
I did not remember. Why should I? The run-
ning lights

And the airy primulas, oblivious
Of the impending bee — they were fair enough
sights.

FROM A COLLEGE WINDOW

THE glimmer of the limes, sun-heavy, sleeping,
Goes trembling past me up the College wall.
Below, the lawn, in soft blue shade is keeping
The daisy-froth quiescent, softly in thrall.

Beyond the leaves that overhang the street,
Along the flagged, clean pavement summer-white,
Passes the world with shadows at their feet
Going left and right.

Remote, although I hear the beggar's cough,
See the woman's twinkling fingers tend him a coin,
I sit absolved, assured I am better off
Beyond a world I never want to join.

FLAPPER

LOVE has crept out of her sealèd heart
As a field-bee, black and amber,
Breaks from the winter-cell, to clamber
Up the warm grass where the sunbeams start.

Mischief has come in her dawning eyes,
And a glint of coloured iris brings
Such as lies along the folded wings
Of the bee before he flies.

Who, with a ruffling, careful breath
Has opened the wings of the wild young sprite?
Has fluttered her spirit to stumbling flight
In her eyes, as a young bee stumbleth?

Love makes the burden of her voice.
The hum of his heavy, staggering wings
Sets quivering with wisdom the common things
That she says, and her words rejoice.

BIRDCAGE WALK

WHEN the wind blows her veil
And uncovers her laughter
I cease, I turn pale.

When the wind blows her veil
From the woes I bewail
Of love and hereafter:

When the wind blows her veil
I cease, I turn pale.

LETTER FROM TOWN: THE
ALMOND TREE

You promised to send me some violets. Did you
forget?

White ones and blue ones from under the orchard
hedge?

Sweet dark purple, and white ones mixed for a
pledge

Of our early love that hardly has opened yet.

Here there's an almond tree — you have never seen
Such a one in the north — it flowers on the street,
and I stand

Every day by the fence to look up for the flowers
that expand

At rest in the blue, and wonder at what they mean.

Under the almond tree, the happy lands

Provence, Japan, and Italy repose,

And passing feet are chatter and clapping of those
Who play around us, country girls clapping their
hands.

LETTER FROM TOWN

You, my love, the foremost, in a flowered gown,
All your unbearable tenderness, you with the
laughter
Startled upon your eyes now so wide with here-
after,
You with loose hands of abandonment hanging down.

FLAT SUBURBS, S.W., IN THE
MORNING

THE new red houses spring like plants
 In level rows
Of reddish herbage that bristles and slants
 Its square shadows.

The pink young houses show one side bright
 Flatly assuming the sun,
And one side shadow, half in sight,
 Half-hiding the pavement-run;

Where hastening creatures pass intent
 On their level way,
Threading like ants that can never relent
 And have nothing to say.

Bare stems of street-lamps stiffly stand
 At random, desolate twigs,
To testify to a blight on the land
 That has stripped their sprigs.

THIEF IN THE NIGHT

LAST night a thief came to me
And struck at me with something dark.
I cried, but no one could hear me,
I lay dumb and stark.

When I awoke this morning
I could find no trace;
Perhaps 'twas a dream of warning,
For I've lost my peace.

LETTER FROM TOWN: ON A GREY
EVENING IN MARCH

THE clouds are pushing in grey reluctance slowly
northward to you,

While north of them all, at the farthest ends,
stands one bright-bosomed, aglance

With fire as it guards the wild north cloud-coasts,
red-fire seas running through

The rocks where ravens flying to windward melt
as a well-shot lance.

You should be out by the orchard, where violets
secretly darken the earth,

Or there in the woods of the twilight, with north-
ern wind-flowers shaken astir.

Think of me here in the library, trying and trying a
song that is worth

Tears and swords to my heart, arrows no armour
will turn or deter.

You tell me the lambs have come, they lie like daisies
white in the grass

Of the dark-green hills; new calves in shed; pee-
wits turn after the plough —

LETTER FROM TOWN

It is well for you. For me the navvies work in the
road where I pass

And I want to smite in anger the barren rock of
each waterless brow.

Like the sough of a wind that is caught up high in the
mesh of the budding trees,

A sudden car goes sweeping past, and I strain my
soul to hear

The voice of the furtive triumphant engine as it
rushes past like a breeze,

To hear on its mocking triumphance unwitting the
after-echo of fear.

SUBURBS ON A HAZY DAY

O STIFFLY shapen houses that change not,
What conjuror's cloth was thrown across you, and
raised

To show you thus transfigured, changed,
Your stuff all gone, your menace almost rased?

Such resolute shapes, so harshly set
In hollow blocks and cubes deformed, and heaped
In void and null profusion, how is this?
In what strong *aqua regia* now are you steeped?

That you lose the brick-stuff out of you
And hover like a presentment, fading faint
And vanquished, evaporate away
To leave but only the merest possible taint!

HYDE PARK AT NIGHT, BEFORE
THE WAR

Clerks

WE have shut the doors behind us, and the velvet
flowers of night
Lean about us scattering their pollen grains of
golden light.

Now at last we lift our faces, and our faces come
aflower
To the night that takes us willing, liberates us to the
hour.

Now at last the ink and dudgeon passes from our
fervent eyes
And out of the chambered weariness wanders a spirit
abroad on its enterprise.

Not too near and not too far
Out of the stress of the crowd
Music screams as elephants scream
When they lift their trunks and scream aloud

HYDE PARK AT NIGHT

For joy of the night when masters are
Asleep and adream.

So here I hide in the Shalimar
With a wanton princess slender and proud,
And we swoon with kisses, swoon till we seem
Two streaming peacocks gone in a cloud
Of golden dust, with star after star
On our stream.

GIPSY

I, the man with the red scarf,
Will give thee what I have, this last week's
earnings.

Take them, and buy thee a silver ring
And wed me, to ease my yearnings.

For the rest, when thou art wedded
I'll wet my brow for thee
With sweat, I'll enter a house for thy sake,
Thou shalt shut doors on me.

TWO-FOLD

How gorgeous that shock of red lilies, and larkspur
cleaving

All with a flash of blue! — when will she be leaving
Her room, where the night still hangs like a half-
folded bat,

And passion unbearable seethes in the darkness, like
must in a vat.

UNDER THE OAK

You, if you were sensible,
When I tell you the stars flash signals, each one
dreadful,
You would not turn and answer me
"The night is wonderful."

Even you, if you knew
How this darkness soaks me through and through,
and infuses
Unholy fear in my vapour, you would pause to dis-
tinguish
What hurts, from what amuses.

For I tell you
Beneath this powerful tree, my whole soul's fluid
Oozes away from me as a sacrifice steam
At the knife of a Druid.

Again I tell you, I bleed, I am bound with withies,
My life runs out.
I tell you my blood runs out on the floor of this oak,
Gout upon gout.

UNDER THE OAK

Above me springs the blood-born mistletoe
In the shady smoke.
But who are you, twittering to and fro
Beneath the oak?

What thing better are you, what worse?
What have you to do with the mysteries
Of this ancient place, of my ancient curse?
What place have you in my histories?

SIGH NO MORE

THE cuckoo and the coo-dove's ceaseless calling,

Calling

Of a meaningless monotony is palling

All my morning's pleasure in the sun-fleck-scattered
wood.

May-blossom and blue bird's-eye flowers falling,

Falling

In a litter through the elm-tree shade are scrawling

Messages of true-love down the dust of the high-
road.

I do not like to hear the gentle grieving,

Grieving

Of the she-dove in the blossom, still believing

Love will yet again return to her and make all good.

When I know that there must ever be deceiving,

Deceiving

Of the mournful constant heart, that while she's
weaving

Her woes, her lover woos and sings within another
wood.

SIGH NO MORE

Oh, boisterous the cuckoo shouts, forestalling,

Stalling

A progress down the intricate enthralling

By-paths where the wanton-headed flowers doff
their hood.

And like a laughter leads me onward, heaving,

Heaving

A sigh among the shadows, thus retrieving

A decent short regret, for that which once was very
good.

LOVE STORM

MANY roses in the wind
Are tapping at the window-sash.
A hawk is in the sky; his wings
Slowly begin to splash.

The roses with the west wind rapping
Are torn away, and a splash
Of red goes down the billowing air.

Still hangs the hawk, with the whole sky moving
Past him — only a wing-beat proving
The will that holds him there.

The daisies in the grass are bending,
The hawk has dropped, the wind is spending
All the roses, and unending
Rustle of leaves washes out the rending
Cry of a bird.

A red rose goes on the wind.— Ascending
The hawk his wind-swept way is wending

LOVE STORM

Easily down the sky. The daisies, sending
Strange white signals, seem intending
To show the place whence the scream was heard.

But, oh, my heart, what birds are piping!
A silver wind is hastily wiping
The face of the youngest rose.

And oh, my heart, cease apprehending!
The hawk is gone, a rose is tapping
The window-sash as the west-wind blows.

Knock, knock, 'tis no more than a red rose rapping,
And fear is a splash of wings.
What, then, if a scarlet rose goes flapping
Down the bright-grey ruin of things!

PARLIAMENT HILL IN THE EVENING

THE houses fade in a melt of mist
Blotching the thick, soiled air
With reddish places that still resist
The Night's slow care.

The hopeless, wintry twilight fades,
The city corrodes out of sight
As the body corrodes when death invades
That citadel of delight.

Now verdigris smoulderings softly spread
Through the shroud of the town, as slow
Night-lights hither and thither shed
Their ghastly glow.

PICCADILLY CIRCUS AT NIGHT

Street-Walkers

WHEN into the night the yellow light is roused like
dust above the towns,
Or like a mist the moon has kissed from off a pool in
the midst of the downs,

Our faces flower for a little hour pale and uncertain
along the street,
Daisies that waken all mistaken white-spread in ex-
pectancy to meet

The luminous mist which the poor things wist was
dawn arriving across the sky,
When dawn is far behind the star the dust-lit town
has driven so high.

All the birds are folded in a silent ball of sleep,
All the flowers are faded from the asphalt isle in
the sea,

PICCADILLY CIRCUS AT NIGHT

Only we fard-faced creatures go round and round,
and keep

The shores of this innermost ocean alive and illu-
sory.

Wanton sparrows that twittered when morning
looked in at their eyes

And the Cyprian's pavement-roses are gone, and
now it is we

Flowers of illusion who shine in our gauds, make a
Paradise

On the shores of this ceaseless ocean, gay birds of
the town-dark sea.

TARANTELLA

SAD he sits on the white sea-stone
And the suave sea chuckles, and turns to the moon,
And the moon significant smiles at the cliffs and the
boulders.

He sits like a shade by the flood alone
While I dance a tarantella on the rocks, and the
croon
Of my mockery mocks at him over the waves' bright
shoulders.

What can I do but dance alone,
Dance to the sliding sea and the moon,
For the moon on my breast and the air on my limbs
and the foam on my feet?

For surely this earnest man has none
Of the night in his soul, and none of the tune
Of the waters within him; only the world's old wis-
dom to bleat.

I wish a wild sea-fellow would come down the glit-
tering shingle,
A soulless neckar, with winking seas in his eyes

TARANTELLA

And falling waves in his arms, and the lost soul's kiss
On his lips: I long to be soulless, I tingle
To touch the sea in the last surprise
Of fiery coldness, to be gone in a lost soul's bliss.

IN CHURCH

IN the choir the boys are singing the hymn.
The morning light on their lips
Moves in silver-moist flashes, in musical trim.

Sudden outside the high window, one crow
Hangs in the air
And lights on a withered oak-tree's top of woe.

One bird, one blot, folded and still at the top
Of the withered tree! — in the grail
Of crystal heaven falls one full black drop.

Like a soft full drop of dark it seems to sway
In the tender wine
Of our Sabbath, suffusing our sacred day.

PIANO

SOFTLY, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the
tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who
smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter
outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano
our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The
glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a
child for the past.

EMBANKMENT AT NIGHT,
BEFORE THE WAR

Charity

By the river
In the black wet night as the furtive rain slinks down,
Dropping and starting from sleep
Alone on a seat
A woman crouches.

I must go back to her.

I want to give her
Some money. Her hand slips out of the breast of
her gown
Asleep. My fingers creep
Carefully over the sweet
Thumb-mound, into the palm's deep pouches.

So, the gift!

God, how she starts!
And looks at me, and looks in the palm of her hand!

EMBANKMENT AT NIGHT

And again at me!
I turn and run
Down the Embankment, run for my life.

But why? — why?

Because of my heart's
Beating like sobs, I come to myself, and stand
In the street spilled over splendidly
With wet, flat lights. What I've done
I know not, my soul is in strife.

The touch was on the quick. I want to forget.

PHANTASMAGORIA

RIGID sleeps the house in darkness, I alone
Like a thing unwarrantable cross the hall
And climb the stairs to find the group of doors
Standing angel-stern and tall.

I want my own room's shelter. But what is this
Throng of startled beings suddenly thrown
In confusion against my entry? Is it only the trees'
Large shadows from the outside street lamp blown?

Phantom to phantom leaning; strange women weep
Aloud, suddenly on my mind
Starting a fear unspeakable, as the shuddering wind
Breaks and sobs in the blind.

So like to women, tall strange women weeping!
Why continually do they cross the bed?
Why does my soul contract with unnatural fear?
I am listening! Is anything said?

PHANTASMAGORIA

Ever the long black figures swoop by the bed;
They seem to be beckoning, rushing away, and beck-
oning.

Whither then, whither, what is it, say
What is the reckoning?

Tall black Bacchae of midnight, why then, why
Do you rush to assail me?
Do I intrude on your rites nocturnal?
What should it avail me?

Is there some great Iacchos of these slopes
Suburban dismal?
Have I profaned some female mystery, orgies
Black and phantasmal?

NEXT MORNING

How have I wandered here to this vaulted room
In the house of life? — the floor was ruffled with
 gold
Last evening, and she who was softly in bloom,
Glimmered as flowers that in perfume at twilight
 unfold

For the flush of the night; whereas now the gloom
Of every dirty, must-besprinkled mould,
And damp old web of misery's heirloom
Deadens this day's grey-dropping arras-fold.

And what is this that floats on the undermist
Of the mirror towards the dusty grate, as if feeling
Unsightly its way to the warmth? — this thing with
 a list
To the left? — this ghost like a candle sweating?

Pale-blurred, with two round black drops, as if it
 missed
Itself among everything else, here hungrily stealing

NEXT MORNING

Upon me! — my own reflection! — explicit gist
Of my presence there in the mirror that leans from
the ceiling!

Then will somebody square this shade with the being
I know

I was last night, when my soul rang clear as a bell
And happy as rain in summer? Why should it be
so?

What is there gone against me, why am I in hell?

PALIMPSEST OF TWILIGHT

DARKNESS comes out of the earth
And swallows dip into the pallor of the west;
From the hay comes the clamour of children's mirth;
Wanes the old palimpsest.

The night-stock oozes scent,
And a moon-blue moth goes flittering by:
All that the worldly day has meant
Wastes like a lie.

The children have forsaken their play;
A single star in a veil of light
Glimmers: litter of day
Is gone from sight.

EMBANKMENT AT NIGHT, BEFORE
THE WAR

Outcasts

THE night rain, dripping unseen,
Comes endlessly kissing my face and my hands.

The river, slipping between
Lamps, is rayed with golden bands
Half way down its heaving sides;
Revealed where it hides.

Under the bridge
Great electric cars
Sing through, and each with a floor-light racing along
at its side.

Far off, oh, midge after midge
Drifts over the gulf that bars
The night with silence, crossing the lamp-touched
tide.

At Charing Cross, here, beneath the bridge
Sleep in a row the outcasts,

EMBANKMENT AT NIGHT

Packed in line with their heads against the wall.
Their feet, in a broken ridge
Stretch out on the way, and a lout casts
A look as he stands on the edge of this naked stall.

Beasts that sleep will cover
Their face in their flank; so these
Have huddled rags or limbs on the naked sleep.
Save, as the tram-cars hover
Past with the noise of a breeze
And gleam as of sunshine crossing the low black
heap,

Two naked faces are seen
Bare and asleep,
Two pale clots swept and swept by the light of the
cars.

Foam-clots showing between
The long, low tidal-heap,
The mud-weed opening two pale, shadowless stars.

Over the pallor of only two faces
Passes the gallivant beam of the trams;
Shows in only two sad places
The white bare bone of our shams.

EMBANKMENT AT NIGHT

A little, bearded man, pale, peaked in sleeping,
With a face like a chickweed flower.
And a heavy woman, sleeping still keeping
Callous and dour.

Over the pallor of only two places
Tossed on the low, black, ruffled heap
Passes the light of the tram as it races
Out of the deep.

Eloquent limbs
In disarray
Sleep-suave limbs of a youth with long, smooth thighs
Hutched up for warmth; the muddy rims
Of trousers fray
On the thin bare shins of a man who uneasily lies.

The balls of five red toes
As red and dirty, bare
Young birds forsaken and left in a nest of mud —
Newspaper sheets enclose
Some limbs like parcels, and tear
When the sleeper stirs or turns on the ebb of the
flood —

EMBANKMENT AT NIGHT

One heaped mound
Of a woman's knees
As she thrusts them upward under the ruffled skirt —
And a curious dearth of sound
In the presence of these
Wastrels that sleep on the flagstones without any
hurt.

Over two shadowless, shameless faces
Stark on the heap
Travels the light as it tilts in its paces
Gone in one leap.

At the feet of the sleepers, watching,
Stand those that wait
For a place to lie down; and still as they stand, they
sleep,
Wearily catching
The flood's slow gait
Like men who are drowned, but float erect in the
deep.

Oh, the singing mansions,
Golden-lighted tall
Trams that pass, blown ruddily down the night!
The bridge on its stanchions

EMBANKMENT AT NIGHT

Stoops like a pall
To this human blight.

On the outer pavement, slowly,
Theatre people pass,
Holding aloft their umbrellas that flash and are
 bright
Like flowers of infernal moly
Over nocturnal grass
Wetly bobbing and drifting away on our sight.

And still by the rotten
Row of shattered feet,
Outcasts keep guard.
Forgotten,
Forgetting, till fate shall delete
One from the ward.

The factories on the Surrey side
Are beautifully laid in black on a gold-grey sky.
The river's invisible tide
Threads and thrills like ore that is wealth to the eye.
And great gold midges
Cross the chasm
At the bridges
Above intertwined plasm.

WINTER IN THE BOULEVARD

THE frost has settled down upon the trees
And ruthlessly strangled off the fantasies
Of leaves that have gone unnoticed, swept like old
Romantic stories now no more to be told.

The trees down the boulevard stand naked in
thought,
Their abundant summery wordage silenced, caught
In the grim undertow; naked the trees confront
Implacable winter's long, cross-questioning brunt.

Has some hand balanced more leaves in the depths
of the twigs?
Some dim little efforts placed in the threads of the
birch? —
It is only the sparrows, like dead black leaves on the
sprigs,
Sitting huddled against the cerulean, one flesh with
their perch.

WINTER IN THE BOULEVARD

The clear, cold sky coldly bethinks itself.
Like vivid thought the air spins bright, and all
Trees, birds, and earth, arrested in the after-thought
Awaiting the sentence out from the welkin brought.

SCHOOL ON THE OUTSKIRTS

How different, in the middle of snows, the great
school rises red!

A red rock silent and shadowless, clung round with
clusters of shouting lads,
Some few dark-cleaving the doorway, souls that cling
as the souls of the dead
In stupor persist at the gates of life, obstinate dark
monads.

This new red rock in a waste of white rises against
the day
With shelter now, and with blandishment, since the
winds have had their way
And laid the desert horrific of silence and snow on
the world of mankind,
School now is the rock in this weary land the winter
burns and makes blind.

SICKNESS

WAVING slowly before me, pushed into the dark,
Unseen my hands explore the silence, drawing the
 bark
Of my body slowly behind.

Nothing to meet my fingers but the fleece of night
Invisible blinding my face and my eyes! What if in
 their flight
My hands should touch the door!

What if I suddenly stumble, and push the door
Open, and a great grey dawn swirls over my feet,
 before
I can draw back!

What if unwitting I set the door of eternity wide
And am swept away in the horrible dawn, am gone
 down the tide
Of eternal hereafter!

SICKNESS

Catch my hands, my darling, between your breasts.
Take them away from their venture, before fate
 wrests
The meaning out of them.

EVERLASTING FLOWERS

WHO do you think stands watching
The snow-tops shining rosy
In heaven, now that the darkness
Takes all but the tallest posy?

Who then sees the two-winged
Boat down there, all alone
And asleep on the snow's last shadow,
Like a moth on a stone?

The olive-leaves, light as gad-flies,
Have all gone dark, gone black.
And now in the dark my soul to you
Turns back.

To you, my little darling,
To you, out of Italy.
For what is the loveliness, my love,
Save you have it with me!

So, there's an oxen wagon
Comes darkly into sight:

EVERLASTING FLOWERS

A man with a lantern, swinging
A little light.

What does he see, my darling
Here by the darkened lake?
Here, in the sloping shadow.
The mountains make?

He says not a word, but passes,
Staring at what he sees.
What ghost of us both do you think he saw
Under the olive trees?

All the things that are lovely —
The things you never knew —
I wanted to gather them one by one
And bring them to you.

But never now, my darling,
Can I gather the mountain-tips
From the twilight like half-shut lilies
To hold to your lips.

And never the two-winged vessel
That sleeps below on the lake

EVERLASTING FLOWERS

Can I catch like a moth between my hands
For you to take.

But hush, I am not regretting:
It is far more perfect now.
I'll whisper the ghostly truth to the world
And tell them how

I know you here in the darkness,
How you sit in the throne of my eyes
At peace, and look out of the windows
In glad surprise.

THE NORTH COUNTRY

IN another country, black poplars shake themselves
over a pond,
And rooks and the rising smoke-waves scatter and
wheel from the works beyond;
The air is dark with north and with sulphur, the grass
is a darker green,
And people darkly invested with purple move pal-
pable through the scene.

Soundlessly down across the counties, out of the
resonant gloom
That wraps the north in stupor and purple travels the
deep, slow boom
Of the man-life north-imprisoned, shut in the hum
of the purpled steel
As it spins to sleep on its motion, drugged dense in
the sleep of the wheel.

Out of the sleep, from the gloom of motion, sound-
lessly, somnambule
Moans and booms the soul of a people imprisoned,
asleep in the rule

THE NORTH COUNTRY

Of the strong machine that runs mesmeric, booming
the spell of its word
Upon them and moving them helpless, mechanic,
their will to its will deferred.

Yet all the while comes the droning inaudible, out of
the violet air,
The moaning of sleep-bound beings in travail that
toil and are will-less there
In the spell-bound north, convulsive now with a
dream near morning, strong
With violent achings heaving to burst the sleep that
is now not long.

BITTERNESS OF DEATH

I

AH, stern, cold man,
How can you lie so relentless hard
While I wash you with weeping water!
Do you set your face against the daughter
Of life? Can you never discard
Your curt pride's ban?

You masquerader!
How can you shame to act this part
Of unswerving indifference to me?
You want at last, ah me!
To break my heart
Evader!

You know your mouth
Was always sooner to soften
Even than your eyes.
Now shut it lies
Relentless, however often
I kiss it in drouth.

BITTERNESS OF DEATH

It has no breath
Nor any relaxing. Where,
Where are you, what have you done?
What is this mouth of stone?
How did you dare
Take cover in death!

II

Once you could see
The white moon show like a breast revealed
By the slipping shawl of stars.
Could see the small stars tremble
As the heart beneath did wield
Systole, diastole.

All the lovely macrocosm
Was woman once to you,
Bride to your groom.
No tree in bloom
But it leaned you a new
White bosom.

And always and ever
Soft as a summering tree

BITTERNESS OF DEATH

Unfolds from the sky, for your good,
Unfolded womanhood;
Shedding you down as a tree
Sheds its flowers on a river.

I saw your brows
Set like rocks beside a sea of gloom,
And I shed my very soul down into your
thought;
Like flowers I fell, to be caught
On the comforted pool, like bloom
That leaves the boughs.

III

Oh, masquerader,
With a hard face white-enamelled,
What are you now?
Do you care no longer how
My heart is trammelled,
Evader?

Is this you, after all,
Metallic, obdurate
With bowels of steel?
Did you *never* feel? —

BITTERNESS OF DEATH

Cold, insensate,
Mechanical!

Ah, no! — you multiform,
You that I loved, you wonderful,
You who darkened and shone,
You were many men in one;
But never this null
This never-warm!

Is this the sum of you?
Is it all nought?
Cold, metal-cold?
Are you all told
Here, iron-wrought?
Is *this* what's become of you?

SEVEN SEALS

SINCE this is the last night I keep you home,
Come, I will consecrate you for the journey.

Rather I had you would not go. Nay come
I will not again reproach you. Lie back
And let me love you a long time ere you go.
For you are sullen-hearted still, and lack
The will to love me. But even so
I will set a seal upon you from my lip,
Will set a guard of honour at each door,
Seal up each channel out of which might slip
Your love for me.

I kiss your mouth. Ah, love,
Could I but seal its ruddy, shining spring
Of passion, parch it up, destroy, remove
Its softly-stirring, crimson welling-up
Of kisses! Oh, help me, God! Here at the source
I'd lie for ever drinking and drawing in
Your fountains, as heaven drinks from out their
course
The floods.

SEVEN SEALS

I close your ears with kisses
And seal your nostrils; and round your neck you'll
wear —

Nay, let me work — a delicate chain of kisses.
Like beads they go around, and not one misses
To touch its fellow on either side.

And there
Full mid-between the champaign of your breast
I place a great and burning seal of love
Like a dark rose, a mystery of rest
On the slow bubbling of your rhythmic heart.

Nay, I persist, and very faith shall keep
You integral to me. Each door, each mystic port
Of egress from you I will seal and steep
In perfect chrism.

Now it is done. The mort
Will sound in heaven before it is undone.

But let me finish what I have begun
And shirt you now invulnerable in the mail
Of iron kisses, kisses linked like steel.
Put greaves upon your thighs and knees, and frail
Webbing of steel on your feet. So you shall feel

SEVEN SEALS

Ensheathed invulnerable with me, with seven
Great seals upon your outgoings, and woven
Chain of my mystic will wrapped perfectly
Upon you, wrapped in indomitable me.

READING A LETTER

SHE sits on the recreation ground

Under an oak whose yellow buds dot the pale blue
sky.

The young grass twinkles in the wind, and the sound
Of the wind in the knotted buds is a canopy.

So sitting under the knotted canopy

Of the wind, she is lifted and carried away as in a
balloon

Across the insensible void, till she stoops to see

The sandy desert beneath her, the dreary platoon.

She knows the waste all dry beneath her, in one place

Stirring with earth-coloured life, ever turning and
stirring.

But never the motion has a human face

Nor sound, save intermittent machinery whirring.

And so again, on the recreation ground

She alights a stranger, wondering, unused to the
scene;

READING A LETTER

Suffering at sight of the children playing around,
Hurt at the chalk-coloured tulips, and the evening-
green.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

ROUND the house were lilacs and strawberries
And foal-foots spangling the paths,
And far away on the sand-hills, dewberries
Caught dust from the sea's long swaths.

Up the wolds the woods were walking,
And nuts fell out of their hair.
At the gate the nets hung, balking
The star-lit rush of a hare.

In the autumn fields the stubble
Tinkled the music of gleaning.
At a mother's knees, the trouble
Lost all its meaning.

Yea, what good beginnings
To this sad end!
Have we had our innings?
God forbend!

INTIME

RETURNING, I find her just the same,
At just the same old delicate game.

Still she says: "Nay, loose no flame
To lick me up and do me harm!
Be all yourself! — for oh, the charm
Of your heart of fire in which I look!
Oh, better there than in any book
Glow and enact the dramas and dreams
I love for ever! — there it seems
You are lovelier than life itself, till desire
Comes licking through the bars of your lips
And over my face the stray fire slips,
Leaving a burn and an ugly smart
That will have the oil of illusion. Oh, heart
Of fire and beauty, loose no more
Your reptile flames of lust; ah, store
Your passion in the basket of your soul,
Be all yourself, one bonny, burning coal
That stays with steady joy of its own fire.
But do not seek to take me by desire.

INTIME

Oh, do not seek to thrust on me your fire!
For in the firing all my porcelain
Of flesh does crackle and shiver and break in pain,
My ivory and marble black with stain,
My veil of sensitive mystery rent in twain,
My altars sullied, I, bereft, remain
A priestess execrable, taken in vain —.”

So the refrain
Sings itself over, and so the game
Re-starts itself wherein I am kept
Like a glowing brazier faintly blue of flame
So that the delicate love-adept
Can warm her hands and invite her soul,
Sprinkling incense and salt of words
And kisses pale, and sipping the toll
Of incense-smoke that rises like birds.

Yet I've forgotten in playing this game,
Things I have known that shall have no name;
Forgetting the place from which I came
I watch her ward away the flame,
Yet warm herself at the fire — then blame
Me that I flicker in the basket;
Me that I glow not with content

INTIME

To have my substance so subtly spent;
Me that I interrupt her game.
I ought to be proud that she should ask it
Of me to be her fire-opal —.

It is well
Since I am here for so short a spell
Not to interrupt her? — Why should I
Break in by making any reply!

TWO WIVES

I

INTO the shadow-white chamber silts the white
Flux of another dawn. The wind that all night
Long has waited restless, suddenly wafts
A whirl like snow from the plum-trees and the pear,
Till petals heaped between the window-shafts
In a drift die there.

A nurse in white, at the dawning, flower-foamed pane
Draws down the blinds, whose shadows scarcely
stain

The white rugs on the floor, nor the silent bed
That rides the room like a frozen berg, its crest
Finally ridged with the austere line of the dead
Stretched out at rest.

Less than a year the fourfold feet had pressed
The peaceful floor, when fell the sword on their rest.
Yet soon, too soon, she had him home again
With wounds between then, and suffering like a guest
That will not go. Now suddenly going, the pain
Leaves an empty breast.

TWO WIVES

II

A tall woman, with her long white gown aflow
As she strode her limbs amongst it, once more
She hastened towards the room. Did she know
As she listened in silence outside the silent door?
Entering, she saw him in outline, raised on a pyre
Awaiting the fire.

Upraised on the bed, with feet erect as a bow,
Like the prow of a boat, his head laid back like the
stern
Of a ship that stands in a shadowy sea of snow
With frozen rigging, she saw him; she drooped like
a fern
Refolding, she slipped to the floor as a ghost-white
peony slips
When the thread clips.

Soft she lay as a shed flower fallen, nor heard
The ominous entry, nor saw the other love,
The dark, the grave-eyed mistress who thus dared
At such an hour to lay her claim, above
A stricken wife, so sunk in oblivion, bowed
With misery, no more proud.

TWO WIVES

III

The stranger's hair was shorn like a lad's dark poll
And pale her ivory face: her eyes would fail
In silence when she looked: for all the whole
Darkness of failure was in them, without avail.
Dark in indomitable failure, she who had lost
Now claimed the host.

She softly passed the sorrowful flower shed
In blonde and white on the floor, nor even turned
Her head aside, but straight towards the bed
Moved with slow feet, and her eyes' flame steadily
burned.

She looked at him as he lay with banded cheek,
And she started to speak

Softly: "I knew it would come to this," she said.
"I knew that some day, soon, I should find you thus.
So I did not fight you. You went your way instead
Of coming mine — and of the two of us
I died the first, I, in the after-life
Am now your wife.

IV

"'Twas I whose fingers did draw up the young
Plant of your body: to me you looked e'er sprung

TWO WIVES

The secret of the moon within your eyes!
My mouth you met before your fine red mouth
Was set to song — and never your song denies
My love, till you went south.

“ 'Twas I who placed the bloom of manhood on
Your youthful smoothness: I fleeced where fleece
was none.

Your fervent limbs with flickers and tendrils of new
Knowledge; I set your heart to its stronger beat;
I put my strength upon you, and I threw
My life at your feet.

“ But I whom the years had reared to be your bride,
Who for years was sun for your shivering, shade for
your sweat,
Who for one strange year was as a bride to you —
you set me aside
With all the old, sweet things of our youth; — and
never yet
Have I ceased to grieve that I was not great enough
To defeat your baser stuff.

V

“ But you are given back again to me
Who have kept intact for you your virginity.

TWO WIVES

Who for the rest of life walk out of care,
Indifferent here of myself, since I am gone
Where you are gone, and you and I out there
Walk now as one.

“Your widow am I, and only I. I dream
God bows his head and grants me this supreme
Pure look of your last dead face, whence now is gone
The mobility, the panther’s gamboling,
And all your being is given to me, so none
Can mock my struggling.

“And now at last I kiss your perfect face,
Perfecting now our unfinished, first embrace.
Your young hushed look that then saw God ablaze
In every bush, is given you back, and we
Are met at length to finish our rest of days
In a unity.”

HEIMWEH

FAR-OFF the lily-statues stand white-ranked in the
garden at home.

Would God they were shattered quickly, the cattle
would tread them out in the loam.

I wish the elder trees in flower could suddenly heave,
and burst

The walls of the house, and nettles puff out from the
hearth at which I was nursed.

It stands so still in the hush composed of trees and
inviolable peace,

The home of my fathers, the place that is mine, my
fate and my old increase.

And now that the skies are falling, the world is spout-
ing in fountains of dirt,

I would give my soul for the homestead to fall with
me, go with me, both in one hurt.

DÉBÂCLE

THE trees in trouble because of autumn,
And scarlet berries falling from the bush,
And all the myriad houseless seeds
Loosing hold in the wind's insistent push

Moan softly with autumnal parturition,
Poor, obscure fruits extruded out of light
Into the world of shadow, carried down
Between the bitter knees of the after-night.

Bushed in an uncouth ardour, coiled at core
With a knot of life that only bliss can unravel,
Fall all the fruits most bitterly into earth
Bitterly into corrosion bitterly travel.

What is it internecine that is locked,
By very fierceness into a quiescence
Within the rage? We shall not know till it burst
Out of corrosion into new florescence.

Nay, but how tortured is the frightful seed
The spark intense within it, all without

DÉBÂCLE

Mordant corrosion gnashing and champing hard
For ruin on the naked small redoubt.

Bitter, to fold the issue, and make no sally;
To have the mystery, but not go forth;
To bear, but retaliate nothing, given to save
The spark in storms of corrosion, as seeds from
the north.

The sharper, more horrid the pressure, the harder
the heart
That saves the blue grain of eternal fire
Within its quick, committed to hold and wait -
And suffer unheeding, only forbidden to expire.

NARCISSUS

WHERE the minnows trace
A glinting web quick hid in the gloom of the brook,
When I think of the place
And remember the small lad lying intent to look
Through the shadowy face
At the little fish thread-threading the watery nook —

It seems to me
The woman you are should be nixie, there is a pool
Where we ought to be.
You undine-clear and pearly, soullessly cool
And waterly
The pool for my limbs to fathom, my soul's last
school.

Narcissus

Ventured so long ago in the deeps of reflection.

Illyssus

Broke the bounds and beyond! — Dim recollection
Of fishes

Soundlessly moving in heaven's other direction!

NARCISSUS

Be

Undine towards the waters, moving back;

For me

A pool! Put off the soul you've got, oh lack

Your human self immortal; take the watery track.

AUTUMN SUNSHINE

THE sun sets out the autumn crocuses
And fills them up a pouring measure
Of death-producing wine, till treasure
Runs waste down their chalices.

All, all Persephone's pale cups of mould
Are on the board, are over-filled;
The portion to the gods is spilled;
Now, mortals all, take hold!

The time is now, the wine-cup full and full
Of lambent heaven, a pledging-cup;
Let now all mortal men take up
The drink, and a long, strong pull.

Out of the hell-queen's cup, the heaven's pale wine —
Drink then, invisible heroes, drink.
Lips to the vessels, never shrink,
Throats to the heavens incline.

And take within the wine the god's great oath
By heaven and earth and hellish stream

AUTUMN SUNSHINE

To break this sick and nauseous dream
We writhe and lust in, both.

Swear, in the pale wine poured from the cups of the
queen

Of hell, to wake and be free
From this nightmare we writhe in,
Break out of this foul has-been.

ON THAT DAY

ON that day

I shall put roses on roses, and cover your grave
With multitude of white roses: and since you were
brave

One bright red ray.

So people, passing under
The ash-trees of the valley-road, will raise
Their eyes and look at the grave on the hill, in
wonder,

Wondering mount, and put the flowers asunder

To see whose praise
Is blazoned here so white and so bloodily red.
Then they will say: " 'Tis long since she is dead,
Who has remembered her after many days? "

And standing there
They will consider how you went your ways
Unnoticed among them, a still queen lost in the maze
Of this earthly affair.

ON THAT DAY

A queen, they'll say,
Has slept unnoticed on a forgotten hill.
Sleeps on unknown, unnoticed there, until
Dawns my insurgent day.

THE END.

